

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 VO-03 SCA-01 CIAE-00 INSE-00

DODE-00 SY-05 DEAE-00 /025 W

-----110288 301219Z /50

R 300855Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5643

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 19220

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH
SUBJECT: THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS BOAT CASE REFUGEES

1. SUMMARY: A RUMOR CIRCULATED IN BANGKOK AUGUST 26 TO THE EFFECT THAT THAI AUTHORITIES WERE TURNING AWAY VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ARRIVING BY BOAT, A VISIT TO THE LAEM SING CAMP THE FOLLOWING DAY REVEALED THAT THE RUMOR WAS FALSE, BUT THAT THAI TREATMENT OF REFUGEES DEPENDED ON THE INDIVIDUAL THAI AGENCY ENCOUNTERED.

2. THE REFUGEE POPULATION AT LAEM SING WAS 1023 AUGUST 27. THIS FIGURE INCLUDED TWO MORE BOATLOADS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES THAT ARRIVED LAST WEEK. HUYNH VAN YEN ON BOAT RG-1232 BROUGHT OUT THE ENTIRE STAFF OF HIS FACTORY IN HA TIEN. THERE WERE 44 IN ALL ABOARD.

THE BOAT FIRST LANDED AT KONG YAI IN TRAT PROVINCE. YEN SAID THAT THE DISTRICT OFFICER THERE WAS QUITE HELPFUL. HE ISSUED THEM RICE, OIL, AND GASOLINE. HE TOLD THEM THAT BECAUSE OF KLONG YAI'S PROXIMITY TO THE CAMBODIAN BORDER (YOU CAN SEE IT FROM THE ROAD), THEY WOULD HAVE TO SEEK REFUGEE ANYWHERE ELSE IN THAILAND. HE THEN ASKED THE MARINE POLICE TO ESCORT THEM OUT TO SEA.

3. ACCORDING TO YEN, THE POLICE DREW WEAPONS ON THE REFUGEES SOMEWHERE OFFSHORE, DEMANDED ALL THEIR GOLD AND JEWELRY ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THE THREAT OF OTHERWISE BEING FORCED TO JUMP OVERBOARD OR BEING TOWED INTO CAMBODIAN WATERS AND CONFISCATED ALL THEIR IDENTITY DOCUMENTS. YEN SAID THAT HE HANDED OVER \$3,200 US AND \$1,650 HK. THE THAI MARINE POLICE BOAT NUMBER WAS 432, A NUMBER HE WILL NOT LIGHTLY FORGET. AFTER THIS EVENT THE BOAT HAD NO PROBLEM EITHER REACHING OR LANDING AT LAEM SING AUGUST 22. WE ARE DISCUSSING THIS INCIDENT WITH THE MINISTRY OF

INTERIOR.)

4. THE OTHER BOAT OWNER, MA SO HUNG, CAME OUT WITH 23 PEOPLE ON BOAT PQ-0713. HE LANDED FIRST AT AN UNKNOWN DISTRICT IN THAILAND TO REPAIR HIS ENGINE. AFTER STAYING A FEW DAYS, THE POLICE TOWED HIS BOAT OUT OF THE HARBOR WITH 21 ABOARD, HAVING KEPT TWO IN A LOCAL JAIL. HE HAD NO STORIES OF POLICE HARASSMENT. ON THE HIGH SEAS, THE THAI NAVY GUIDED THE BOAT TOWARD LAEM SING. AT SOME JUNCTURE THE BOAT BROKE UP AND SANK. HUNG WAS NOT SPECIFIC ABOUT WHAT CAUSED THE SINKAGE, BUT NEARBY THAI FISHING BOATS RESCUED AT LEAST 18 OF HIS PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE LAEM SING CAMP SINCE AUGUST 25. THE OTHER THREE MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN ELSEWHERE, OR HAVE DROWNED.

5. COMMENT: THESE TWO INCIDENTS REVEALED THAT THE THAI HAVE SO FAR NO GENERAL ENFORCED POLICY OF TURNING BOAT CASE REFUGEES AWAY FROM THE TWO CAMPS SET UP TO RECEIVE THEM. THERE WERE ARRIVALS LAST WEEK AT THE SONGKHLA CAMP AS WELL. TREATMENT ON THE HIGH SEAS VARIES ACCORDING TO THE THAI AGENCY THAT THE REFUGEES ENCOUNTER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO19220
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770313-0120
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770810/aaaaahzw.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9ba88c4e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION DHA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1397879
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS BOAT CASE REFUGEES
TAGS: SREF, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9ba88c4e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009